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The English Curriculum in the Secondary Schools in Decatur

By WILMER A. LAMAR

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Chairman of the English Curriculum Committee

For many years in Decatur teachers of English have tried to plan their courses with consideration for the actual needs of the students, the social realities of the time, and the necessity of building a sound personal philosophy based on our principles of democracy. For the last two years and a half there has been an intensified study of the curriculum in English.

This study in Decatur has progressed under the guidance of the assistant superintendent, who is adviser to the curriculum committee in English, the latter being made up of the head of the Department of English in the Senior High School and the heads of the Departments of English in the four junior high schools. Coordination between this committee and the other departments in the secondary schools is secured through a Curriculum Cabinet made up of the top administrators, the principals of the secondary schools, and the chairmen of the various subject field curriculum areas.

Valuable assistance has been given by the State Department of Public Instruction, the University of Illinois, and the state normal universities, under the sponsorship of the Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program. Dr. John J. DeBoer, Dr. J. N. Hook, Miss

EDITOR'S NOTE: The English departments of the Decatur secondary schools are experimenting in revision of their curriculums, in cooperation with the Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program. The first five articles in this issue describe some of the results to date.

Alice Lohrer, Miss Liesette McHarry, and Miss Verna Hoyman, as members of a team, have given valuable assistance.

It should be pointed out that curriculum growth in Decatur, thus far, has been a matter of internal growth. The assumption has been made that much of past teaching has been excellent. The teacher has been free to use his own judgment in modifying his ideas and teaching techniques. It has not been a matter of an "expert" superimposing his curricular pattern upon the teaching staff; neither the administration nor the team has insisted that its ideas be accepted.

Curricular work, if successful, is not for a semester, but is continuous; time must be allowed for work on curriculum; physical properties—library facilities, conference tables and movable chairs, room libraries, audio-visual aids, filing space, adequate bulletin boards—must be improved as rapidly as possible; classes must not be too large.

That the teachers have accepted the pattern of curriculum revision in Decatur is evidenced by changing concepts in the teaching of English. Through our studies we have come more and more to believe that if we are to meet the needs of all of the children they will have to be led to interpret more realistically our own atomic age; that we cannot bury our heads and those of our students in the sands of the past and call that adequate teaching of English. A prime consideration is to relate the materials to the student's own experiences. In other words we are not leaving the development of social sensitivity and personal ideals in today's world to the other educational forces—the movies, the comic books, the radio, television, the newspapers, the juke joints—crowding teen-agers' lives.

We are building courses in the Department of English around such topics as "Understanding the Growth of Man's Progress Against the Unknown," "The Price of Liberty," "Democracy Is Conceived of as a Way of Life." This does not mean that in striving to interpret the present, we are overlooking or slighting the great literary heritage of the past. It does mean that the writings of Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer, Emerson, and Whitman are read by those students who are capable of comprehending them and that the "classics" are used to throw light upon those universal and timeless problems which have always beset men. Thus the focus on much traditional subject matter must be changed.

When we adapt the courses in English to the social and psychological problems of youth we find ourselves talking about how

to understand and get along with people, education for marriage, home management, health and civic affairs. Many teachers and students show deep concern over world problems, race prejudice, and morality.

The reading lists are broad and extensive and arranged not only to shed light upon topics of mutual interest but also to appeal to students on all levels of reading ability. Under the topic, "Understanding the Growth of Freedom," such books as *The Apostle*, *Garibaldi*, *John Brown's Body*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Drums Along the Mohawk*, *Johnny Tremain*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Berlin Diary*, and *Ben Hur* may be included. Class discussion is no longer a question of a teacher's lecturing to a dull and drowsy and bored student but is a matter of a student's being able to contribute to a central idea after he has read something on his own level.

We believe, then, that education in English must help young people to compensate for the strain of a mechanized and war-strained society. Students need to be able to find in their leisure hours that sense of personal importance and usefulness which they need. Teachers in English in Decatur have evaluated their own efforts by asking whether or not the child is interested in what he is doing, whether this interest is increasing, whether the student develops a clearer concept of what he is doing, whether new interests develop from his activities, and whether, when it is all said and done, all class activities and interests are making for the development of the good life.

When we ask these questions, we come to the conclusion that :

1. Isolated verbal education is ineffective in stimulating growth and enrichment of young people. The far-away must be explained in terms of the near-at-hand.

2. A student must develop social understanding through literature.

3. He must understand our changing culture and the struggles of social, political, and economic forces.

4. Literature must be chosen for its power to meet a need, a desire, a problem of youth. Current sources—books, newspapers, magazines—must be utilized, as must literature of the past.

5. In other words, the fundamental basis of the curriculum itself should be experience. Life itself should be the essence of the subject matter. Textbook study should give way to or be supplemented by enriched approaches.

6. Adult thoughts should not be imposed on children until those children are ready for such thoughts.

It is true that in Decatur the forty-four teachers of English have not absorbed these truths at the same rate and have not modified class procedures to the same extent. It is possible for us to point, however, to these achievements:

1. All teachers are bringing literature and composition closer together.
2. All teachers are teachers of speech.
3. All teachers are taking more and more advantage of pupil help in planning.
4. All teachers are stressing group participation—sharing of ideas, democratic processes and group dynamics, panels, symposiums, committees.
5. All teachers are making more use of audio-visual materials.
6. All teachers are taking into account current materials.

While there is great diversity of interest and concept among the teachers of English in the secondary schools of Decatur, the following are several points upon which most will agree: that English is not merely a tool subject conceived in order that students may better succeed in others, that literature is the great storehouse of human experience, that in the study of literature life is found with all its diversities, that in the study of life through literature lies great opportunity for creative growth, that through literature students are brought to grips with the living stuff that cultures are made of, that good books live.

In the field of speech we believe, since the first job is to teach children to think and consider and then to speak simply and to the point, that meaningful speech opportunities grow out of every class, whether it be English, social studies, mathematics, science, or business education; that it is not necessary to stress complicated academic facts about speaking; that our efforts should be spent in developing skills in speaking; that instructors should train students in such fundamentals as adequate preparation, choosing the right subject, talking on subjects they have earned the right to talk about, being interested in the subject, learning the importance of speaking with spirit and animation, having a good time speaking, having a natural conversational opening, having a mental and emotional impact on the audience.

To meet more adequately the needs of the students and to afford better opportunity for expression of what we believe worthy concepts of teaching English to be, several new courses have been set up. Among these are combination English and history courses in the seventh grade in two junior high schools, two combination

sophomore English and world history classes, Individual English for retarded readers in the sophomore year, two combination American literature and social studies classes in the junior year, and the division of senior English into classes in English for Everyday Living and Creative Reading for non-college students, and finally Survey of English Literature, College Preparatory English, and Creative Writing for those who plan to enter college.

I have mentioned several combinations of English and history and English and social studies. Before inaugurating such a program, experience in Decatur has shown that several factors need to be considered:

1. Adequate time for pre-planning and gathering materials
2. Personality adjustments if two teachers are to work together
3. Administrative difficulties—arrangement of two hour blocks of time, freedom from schedule conflicts in order that students shall be free two hours in succession for the course
4. A selling program to the entire faculty and counselors
5. A selling program to the students and parents who, for the most part, prefer courses in the traditional manner
6. The danger of attaching an English label to a social studies outline.

Thus far, most of our work has been within the field of English itself. If it should sometime prove desirable to move into the revolutionary realms of the broad-fields curriculum, or the core, or the experience curriculum, there must be a willingness on the part of all the teachers involved. This change of mind on the part of teachers who believe in the sacredness of their own respective fields is very slow. The students, too, and their parents are reluctant to move from precedent and old times. Children's minds may be stunted and warped by heaps of disjointed facts which do not develop every faculty in just proportions, but if many teachers believe in strict adherence to subject matter lines, little can be expected from the general public. Before we abandon subject matter lines, there must be convincing proof that such abandonment is in the best interests of our young people, who will be tomorrow's citizens.

We Move Backward to Go Forward

By AGNES C. KOSCIELNY

Head of the Department of English, Johns Hill Junior High School, Decatur

Something was lost when the highly departmentalized system of education replaced the proverbial one room school. No longer did teachers have the opportunity to guide and counsel their students for more than one period a day. Pupils suffered a loss as well, with overlapping subject matter, the loss of dignity and control by teachers through hourly comparison, and shifts in group membership from hour to hour.

The two hour block program comprising English and social studies is a step backward to accelerate forward movement in modern teaching and was inaugurated at Johns Hill Junior High School of Decatur in 1949 with a seventh grade class of forty pupils. The class was of average intelligence and consisted of sixteen boys and twenty-four girls. Mr. Norman C. Gore, the principal, conceived the idea, and assistance was obtained from curriculum consults from the University of Illinois, headed by Professor John De Boer. The writer was assigned to this project but with constant admonition not to overplay her own field of teaching, which is English. However, she did have equivalent hours of university work in both social studies and English.

This writer is of the opinion that projects carried on within a given classroom should grow out of the needs and interests of the pupils rather than be teacher-imposed units. Thus came about the Navajo Unit which is discussed here as an example of the way that English and social studies are blended in one seventh-grade class.

A timely suggestion appearing in Current Events Newspaper brought to the attention of the class ways to be their own Santa Claus. The article suggested that clothing and other articles were needed by many groups, including the Navajo Indians. The class immediately became curious about the Navajos. Before any steps were taken to render assistance, a few of the students suggested that it might be wise to write directly to Mr. Bert Pousma, head of Navajo Assistance Inc., for specific information. Thus the first example of group initiative was shown.

Upon receipt of this specific information from Mr. Pousma, the group was so impressed with the importance of this national problem that they expressed a desire not only to help as a class,

but to embark on a program which would inform and enlist the aid of their fellow teen-agers and the community at large.

The teacher sent an elected committee from the class to Mr. Gore, the principal, to ask for permission to use the auditorium for presentation of their plans as a medium of informing others. Mr. Gore wisely told this committee that they must first demonstrate their ability to present something worthwhile.

The committee returned to the class with their report, and at this point one can well imagine the resulting group discussion, with varying suggestions and ideas, which was a fine example of democracy at work. The discussion ended with the election of ten representative pupils to serve on a panel to do research work. This panel conferred at once with the school librarian, Miss Caryl Conely, who assisted them in this research. Periodicals and reference books were used extensively. After getting this background information the panel met with the teacher to discuss what points needed emphasis in order to give a true pattern and picture of the Navajo's plight.

It was agreed that the following topics would be presented for class discussion:

- The early history of the Navajos
- Their experience at Fort Wingate
- Government restrictions on the Navajos
- How the Navajo makes a living today
- Present health needs
- Present educational needs
- Present everyday needs
- The United States' responsibility
- What the class plans to do

The panel at this point selected a chairman, chose the topics which interested them most, and proceeded to find specific information pertinent to their topics.

This facts-gathering panel had to learn the difference between recreatory and informational reading. They had to learn the basic techniques of gathering and organizing information, such as taking notes, writing their reports, and the actual reporting of the material gathered, in order to present their findings to the remainder of the class.

When the panel was ready to report, the class served as the evaluators of the material gathered. The microphone was brought into use, and tape recordings were made of the discussions. The class in evaluation gave advice on enunciation, pronunciation, voice

quality, behavior, understanding and interpretation of ideas, and time. The panel spent many hours of work on refinement before the class accepted their report.

At this point of progress, the class, even to the last student, expressed a desire for individual activity in the program. In their group discussion they conceived the idea of having one of their number act as Mr. Bert Pousma, who was to visit a typical Navajo village and community, and talk with its people who were to be acted by the other pupils of the class. In this way, the Navajo's daily living problems could be portrayed most vividly, bringing to all who viewed the presentation a truer picture of the problem. The pupil who was to take the part of Mr. Pousma was chosen by popular selection, and in order to make the presentation even more realistic, he was made up to resemble Mr. Pousma.

It was decided to show the following typical Navajos: silversmiths, rug-weavers, corn grinders, basket weavers, sand painters, pottery makers, witch doctors, doll makers, reed weavers, sick Indian child and squaw, and of course an Indian chief.

Fortunately, and coincidentally, the class noted in a local newspaper article that the Navajo Indian life and arts were being featured in the Art Galleries of the Illinois State Museum in Springfield, Illinois. It should also be mentioned that the writer had been reading to the class the excellent book *Spin a Silver Dollar*, by A. Hannum. The class, who voted to visit the exhibit, were almost overwhelmed to discover a fine exhibition of etchings and paintings by Jimmy, the principal character of Mr. Hannum's book. It was through this and other research work that the class was finally ready to show Mr. Gore what it had done in a preparatory way, and obtain permission to go through with its plan.

The presentation in the auditorium was a fine success and was attended by the entire administrative staff of the Decatur Schools, headed by Superintendent W. R. McIntosh. The teaching staff of Johns Hill attended, as did many parents and visiting principals, teachers of English and social studies in other schools, and many other members of our community. This success made it comparatively easy for the class to complete its drive for the materials to be forwarded to the Navajos, consisting of more than 1000 pounds of clothing and school supplies.

The mass of detail attendant to the preparation and presentation of this teaching project is too lengthy to give here. The important thing is that a rich educational program was the outcome of this unit. Such topics as letter writing and creative writing were taught

as the need arose; geography and map-reading and map-making came easily through the need of locating the Navajo reservations in the United States. Art was presented to the class in the making of their stage scenery, designs on pottery, costumes and sand painting, with the aid of Miss Opal Cutler, art instructor at Johns Hill. Public speech, with its necessary skills of organization, pronunciation, and enunciation, was improved through group gatherings, aided by Mr. Charles Smith, in charge of Audio-Visual aids at our school. Miss Myrtle Cooper, teacher of social studies at Johns Hill, instructed the class in the art of design in Indian jewelry. Miss Marguerite Pollock, teacher of music, participated in the program of Indian music needed to complete the presentation. Many points of English were covered in the making of notes, the making of briefs, punctuation, spelling, and organization. Social consciousness was gained in the study of the needs of other groups in our national life. The drive for gift materials was strictly a social activity, though the writing of short rhymes, slogans, and captions gave further teaching to language usage. But the writer feels that the most important point gained in the teaching of social studies was the fact that the individual members of the class had the opportunity of discovering the strength and weaknesses of their fellow pupils, whereby they might evaluate themselves in comparison.

The Program of English in the Sophomore Year in Decatur

By RUTH R. CARSON
Decatur High School

Progress isn't necessarily the result of rapid change. Perhaps that is the reason that the Decatur teachers approached the revision of the sophomore program with measured step.

At first, sessions were spent on formulating philosophy and objectives in order to have a common background of theory. Then the sophomore teachers were ready to evaluate the existing course of study which was based on formal grammar, composition, and the classics *Ivanhoe*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Realizing that individual differences exist among teachers as well as students, the administration gave the green light for each sophomore teacher to become an adventurer on the road to curriculum revision. Two sets of thirty copies each of *Meet an American*, six sets of *People in Literature*, one set of *As Others Like You*, and eight sets of five copies each of teen-age fiction books were purchased to enrich the reading program. The teachers were to use the classics that they thought would best meet the needs of the class.

In many cases teacher-pupil planning was used to determine the needs of the class. In some classes only a part of the group read a particular classic. In others a plan was formulated either by committee action or class discussion or perhaps both to meet the individual differences of the group. In most cases the stories in *People in Literature* became the common reading experience for the class. Then the students were ready to approach other material, such as movies, fiction, and their own experiences. A concerted effort was made to have the communication, both oral and written, be an outgrowth of their reading experiences. In retrospect most of the teachers feel that better correlation should have been made between literature and functional grammar. The teachers felt that failure to include enough functional grammar was the weakest part of the program last year.

Feeling that progress has been made in the right direction, the teachers have made further steps toward enrichment of the sophomore program for this year. Three anthologies, *Beyond the Seas*, *Exploring Literary Trails*, and *Reading Literature—Your*

Life, have been added. Since one of the anthologies is a ninth grade book, most of the teachers used the results of the Iowa Silent Reading Test in distributing the books. With a year's experience to guide them the teachers placed greater emphasis on correlation between literature and communication. Keeping in mind that the classroom should be child-centered, the teachers are striving to meet the present and future needs of the students to enable them to face better the realities of life.

Perhaps you would be interested in the outline of our present course of study. Since plans must be flexible in order to meet the needs of the students and since revision is a continuing process, the course of study is mimeographed and not printed. At the end of the semester the teachers hold an evaluation session.

The course for sophomore English is divided into seven main topics: namely, Youth: to understand people of my own age; Family: to understand people of different age groups; Nationalities: to understand people of different nations; Minorities: to understand people of minority groups in America; Vocations: to understand roads to success; Freedom: to understand the growth of freedom; and the Future: to understand the challenge of the future.

For each unit materials are selected to meet certain goals. As an example let us look at the first unit, on Youth.

The first few days are spent on orientation because we know that a student will do better work if he feels at home in his new environment. Perhaps this is the only time that you will find all the sophomore teachers doing about the same thing at the same time. I shall describe my plan for the first unit, not because it is the best but because it is the one that I know best.

After the orientation period within the group, which included a letter of introduction to the teacher, we read stories in *Meet an American*. These stories about youth gave us a common reading experience. Then we decided to see what types of problems teenagers face in some fiction books. Fourteen titles (six new sets were selected last spring) were listed on the board, a brief preview of each book was given, and then the students were ready to go to the library to select their books. They were asked to look for four things in their reading: 1. personality traits of the characters, 2. problems facing the characters, 3. solution of the problems, 4. evaluation of the solution. The students spent a week in reading one, two, or three books. During the class periods we saw and discussed three movies—"Shy Guy," "Are You Popular," and "You and Your Friends." Teacher-pupil planning was used with our movies. A teacher and at least one representative from each sophomore class previewed the movie and formulated questions

to present to the members of the class before they saw the movie. This same representative led the discussion after the movie. Also sometime during this period a theme entitled "My Ideal Friend" was written.

Let us return to the fiction books. Those students who read the same book formed a committee and decided how they wanted to present the book to the class. They used panel discussions, symposiums, or just a review if only one person had read the book.

Next the anthologies were distributed and certain stories were suggested for this unit. The students decided on the minimum to be read, the stories to be considered in class, and the manner of presentation.

These stories suggested incidents they had experienced; therefore writing about a personal problem or experience was the next assignment. This theme was the bridge for the following assignments. Some of the students needed to ask themselves these questions: How do I write a complete sentence? How do I make the subject and the verb agree? How do I punctuate compound and complex sentences?

Another logical connection between functional grammar and literature was made when the students handed in their report of a family interview. This was in preparation for the reading of stories about the family. I hope you can see that now we are trying to overcome the weakness of last year's program by making a closer correlation between literature and functional grammar.

Our ultimate goal is to enrich students' lives by opening windows and doors and by broadening the horizon. This is a real challenge to each English teacher.

English and American History

By CHRISTA HERRIN
Decatur High School

That English can be correlated satisfactorily with American history is the conclusion that I have reached after a year and a half of experimentation. The American history teacher with whom I have worked and I agree, however, that it is more expedient and purposeful to teach the English in units, these units being chosen to complement and support the ones studied in history. This dovetailing of units may best be explained by briefly outlining the ones which we have studied in both classes so far this year, mentioning more specifically those in the English class.

During the early part of the first semester the history class began a unit of study which might be called "The Peopling of America." The story of immigration from the colonial period to the present was developed, emphasis being placed upon the worth of the contributions of all people in making America the great nation it is today. We chose this approach in preference to that of pointing out the undesirable in intergroup relationships. This philosophy was enriched in the English class by means of a program of wide reading of books, both fiction and non-fiction, in which the contributions of national groups were stressed. Such books as Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, Willa Cather's *O Pioneers*, Mary Antin's *Promised Land*, and the *Autobiography of Edward Bok* present in convincing manner the contributions of the settlers of old world background in the making of America. The reading, of course, was done on an individual basis, making it possible for each student to choose books according to his taste and reading ability.

As the history class studied more specifically the development of democracy from the standpoint of government, we had a golden opportunity to enrich the study in English. We read the Declaration of Independence and later used it as a basis for a lesson in outlining; we studied the Bill of Rights and followed this with a class discussion of the responsibilities of citizenship; together we read Stephen Vincent Benet's "Freedom Is a Hard Bought Thing," the story of a Negro slave who won his freedom.

All of this laid the groundwork for a study of the specific contributions of noted Americans in their efforts to make a living truth of the dream that America should have a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Each student selected one person for further study so that he could make a report of his contributions and what they had meant to America. We developed a tentative outline to serve as a guide in the reading so that from the beginning it might be purposeful. Later, of course, the students made their own outlines to fit the materials they found. Preparations for the speeches included many of the things taught in any English class, the finding of material in the library, the writing of bibliographies, the taking of notes, the organization of outlines, and giving of speeches. At this point the history teacher suggested that they write out the stories of the contributions so that other classes might have the benefit of their research. They did this using their revised speech outlines. Since we planned to have the papers typed and placed in booklets there was a special incentive to do good work, for they knew others would read what they wrote.

While writing the papers, the students found that they needed to know how to construct better sentences. Surprising as it may seem, they are now enthusiastic about studying the ways in which words may be put together so that ideas may be clearly expressed. During this study of grammar we shall not be actively correlating with the history teacher. When it is for the best interests of the students to discontinue correlation, we discontinue it.

These same units, of course, could be used in any class whether or not in correlation with a specific history teacher. Correlating with one teacher, however, has certain advantages: 1. It is easier to work on complementary units at the same time; 2. two teachers working together develop somewhat the same philosophy; 3. the history teacher becomes an English teacher; 4. it is mutually helpful to share information about students in the class; and 5. the students by being together for two periods get to know each other better and feel more comfortable and at home.

English for Everyday Living

By LOUISE FIKE
Decatur High School

The purposes of the new course in senior English entitled "English for Everyday Living" and intended mainly for students who will not go on to college are, in brief, these:

I. To provide experiences in communication which will make for a more satisfying teen-age life and which will contribute to a more richly endowed adult life.

II. To provide opportunities in and out of the classroom for the student to express himself effectively whenever and wherever possible, and to help him feel that these opportunities are real-life experiences rather than artificialities set up for the purpose of achieving a good grade.

The plan includes special attention to problems of high school youth (Dr. Harold Hand's compilation) and suggestions for help in solving them through the avenues of the four basic skills—reading, writing, speaking, listening. This list of problems provides the basis for panel discussion followed by general participation of the other members during a question-and-answer hour.

Units in process of development, at present, are these: (1) personality, (2) character, (3) family relations, (4) community relations, (5) boy-girl relations, (6) participation in community enterprises, (7) learning to make wise choices of magazines, newspapers, books, pictures, records, and radio programs, (8) field trips, (9) talks and classroom lectures by persons of authority in various areas of interest in the community.

Certain of the classics, which it is only reasonable to expect a high school graduate to know, we use for enrichment. It is unfortunate but true that most of those registering for this type of course have little native taste for other than very light and inconsequential literature.

As additional textual material we use *Practical English and Literary Cavalcade* regularly. Many students subscribe for *Reader's Digest* and *Coronet* to use for oral reports and leisure reading.

One class hour per week is devoted to the reading of books in preparation for a bi-weekly book review. Personal taste is the chief dictator in the choice of books for these reports. We want youth to learn to like reading for its own sake.

By way of an effort to realize Part I of our purpose, we have employed the five W's of good reporting in the building of a background for an exploration of the values to be derived from a study

of time-honored authors with whom the high school graduate should be familiar.

It is frequently difficult for high school youth to find rapport with other than their contemporaries; therefore the teacher must try to effect a meeting and encourage further satisfactory acquaintance between the youngster of today and the adult of today or yesterday.

The general plan of one such unit follows:

By way of introduction to Tennyson and the Brownings my class and I sat in our customary circle, chair arms cleared of all save pencils and paper. Faces were puzzled, expectant.

I spoke carefully of the fact that all of us have many problems in common; that there are certain basic and universal questions which we ask ourselves many times; that by means of these questions and attempts at answers people eventually establish a kinship whether they are contemporaries or not.

"There are," I continued, "times in our lives when we wonder, 'Who am I? Where did I come from?'"

I paused. There was significant quiet. A hand was raised. I nodded.

"Where am I going?" Bob added.

"How am I going to get there?" Betty suggested.

We began to write.

Another hand. It was Jack's. He had begun only recently to "date," so his question was,

"Who am I going to take with me?"

We wrote that down.

By this time we were traveling and must not be delayed even by a possible grammatical error. There would be time for that later.

In a very few moments we had assembled a compelling list. Tomorrow we would discuss some answers which authors like Tennyson and Browning seemed to find satisfying when our questions were theirs also.

During our discussion we devoted time to memorizing from "In Memoriam," "Flower in the Crannied Wall," "Rabbi Ben Ezra," and "Sonnets from the Portuguese"—lines which have provided various kinds of reassurance through the years.

The experience seemed to do much toward leading seniors to appreciate the fact that great minds, in whatever period they live and write, are not provincial and do offer clues to the solution of perplexities common to men of all ages.

When the time came to move on, we had found directives to follow relative to what is good, how to make wise choices, the part

of youth and age in life's pattern, how to meet disappointment and loss, and, finally, something to take with us as part of the Great Answer.

By way of realizing Part II of the purpose for such a course, an entirely different technique and program are needed. Therefore, it is important that there be some practice in the use of certain skills which out-of-school activities will require.

Each class, at the beginning of the semester, selects a staff of ten to serve for the first six weeks' period. There is a steering committee of five who conduct the first "Problem Panel," give attention to reporting any who are ill, attend to sending flowers or writing notes, and plan a social affair which is held during the regular class hour. Two receptionists sit near the door to take care of any bulletins or interruptions of recitation not requiring the teacher's attention. Two librarians distribute and collect papers and magazines; and two secretaries take care of reporting attendance. An entirely new staff takes office each new period.

Our parties provide occasions for playing together. We feel that this experience helps us the better to work together and relieves the tension of those who suffer from diffidence. We try to give special thought to the shy, the indifferent, and those in a racial minority.

Each staff currently in office returns on the evening of open house during National Education Week to greet parents and assist with explanations.

Many students in these classes feel need for reviews in spelling, grammar, and writing, by way of rounding out their public school years. Hence we pay considerable attention to these drills.

At the beginning of the semester students listed briefly the occupations which they planned to pursue after graduation. Mechanic, carpenter, tool and die maker, "follow the harvest," eating place and tavern, grocery store, "I haven't the slightest idea," secretary—these are typical. Such young people as these are soon to be American voters, American parents, the bulk of America's population. In as much as only four out of one hundred of this group, with the exception of potential nurses, list as chosen occupations those which would require college training, it is vital that the last year's work in English be planned for emphasis on what we are pleased to call "fundamentals" in both mechanics and cultural aspects of the language and literature. To this end our embryonic course entitled English for Everyday Living is trying to live up to its name by filling a need long recognized but, as yet, unsatisfied.

Recommendation of New College Admission Requirements

A Review of Bulletin Number Nine of Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program

By Verna A. Hoyman
Illinois State Normal University

Improvement of the secondary school curriculum is influenced by the pressure of community demands, the capabilities of teachers, and college entrance requirements. Close examination of these factors often shows that the attitudes of parents and teachers are dependent on their interpretation of college entrance requirements. Any major change in the high school curriculum will provoke such questions as "Will this course be accepted by the colleges?" and "Will the students who take this course be adequately prepared for college?"

Frequently parents and teachers believe that college entrance requirements are more specific than they actually are. Much misinformation is causing retardation of curricular change. More information on college entrance requirements is needed to meet the questions and criticisms of teachers and of the patrons of the high schools.

However, the specification by colleges of certain high school courses to be taken by all students seeking college entrance does set definite limitations to curricular revision. The balance of power between the American high school and college rests with the latter. A single requirement of the colleges can influence the high school curriculum. Planning from the top down is inconsistent with our concept of educational continuity. If maturation is a consistent enlargement of abilities, the present great gaps should not exist.

College entrance requirements influence the curriculums of all high schools and practically determine the curriculum offerings of many small high schools. Recognizing this fact, the Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program has devised a recommendation which would protect the college interests and give the high schools more freedom to improve their services. The title of the bulletin *New College Admission Requirements Recommended*, which has the subtitle *A Proposal for Cooperative Action by the Secondary Schools and Colleges in Illinois*, indicates the necessity

of the colleges' sharing responsibility in designing a program of growth and development for Illinois youth.

A part of Bulletin Number Nine is a review of the findings of research. Studies show that preparation for college does not depend upon the study of certain prescribed subjects. Admission policies seem to have been adopted through analogy, tradition, imitation, and logrolling of vested interests rather than through evaluation based upon research.

Part Four consists of guiding principles and recommendations. The principles emphasize the joint responsibility of the high school and the college. The high school carries the responsibility of educating all youth. The colleges have an interest in obtaining competent students from the high schools. Information about students which will enable colleges to select students wisely should be provided by the high schools.

The recommendations list five criteria which can be used by colleges to provide prediction of probable success in college. These are based on extensive research. These predictors of college success are:

1. Score on a scholastic aptitude test
2. Score on a test of critical reading
3. Score on a test of writing skill
4. Score on a simple mathematics test
5. Evidence that the student has an intellectual interest and some effective study habits as shown by his having taken at least two years of work in one field in high school in which his grades were better than average.

It is one thing to recommend change and quite another thing to bring about change. The last section of the bulletin is "The Implementation of the Proposal." A group of educators, representing Illinois high schools and colleges as well as the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program, have been appointed to serve on a committee to work with high schools and colleges to implement these proposals regarding new college admission requirements.

Condensation of *Principal Findings of the Basic Studies*¹

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I

In 1947-1948 the Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program conducted studies regarded as basic for curriculum revision. The studies reported in this ISSCP bulletin concern the holding power of schools, hidden tuition costs, participation in extra-class activities, and guidance. All of these topics directly and indirectly concern the teacher of English.

Who should be educated? Americans are dedicated to full equality of educational opportunity for all the children of all the people. Except for a tiny fraction who must be institutionalized, all our youth are destined to become husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, workers, employers, drivers of automobiles, neighbors, spenders of income, users of leisure time, formulators of public opinion, voters, etc., in our communities. Consequently the community's need for secondary education must be regarded as unmet precisely to the degree that the public school is not attracting and holding all the youth of the community not otherwise enrolled in educational institutions. Data from the United States Office of Education reveal that only about one-half of all American youth of secondary school age complete high school.

If a school would increase its holding power, it must find out by a factual study of its own locality the typical characteristics of its own drop-outs before it can possibly know what changes need to be made in order to make itself durably attractive to all the children of all the people. The holding power study was designed not only to find out how many of each locality are typically dropping out but also who it is that typically drops out of that local school.

The hidden tuition costs study was designed to discover all costs to the pupil in attending the local high school and participat-

¹ *Principal Findings of the 1947-48 Basic Studies of the Illinois Secondary Schools Curriculum Program*, by Harold Hand. Published by the State of Illinois Superintendent of Public Instruction.

ing in its classes and activities. It is only as such data are unearthed that interested persons can possibly know whether local costs make it difficult or impossible for poorer children to attend school and participate in activities.

The third basic study which shed light on "who is being served?" was the study of participation in extra-class activities. In earlier studies it was found that pupils from the uppermost income group spent on the average about three times as much as did the poorer children. Moreover, well-to-do pupils were participating in activities fully one-third more than their relative number in the student population would indicate, and poorer children were members of teams, clubs, etc., in proportions about 40 per cent smaller than their relative number would indicate. It is not strange that the poorer children find that high school life is less attractive than do their more fortunately born fellows. What is found true elsewhere may or may not be true locally. There is no way to find out except through a local factual study.

The guidance study has a bearing on what should be taught and what service should be provided by the school. Obviously there is little point in striving to attract and hold all the children of all the people if the program of the school is little related to the needs of the youth and of the society which it is supposed to be serving.

II

Twenty-two high schools were included in the study of the holding power. The chief conclusions drawn from administrators' answers to 72 questions are these:

1. The number withdrawing varied from less than 1 for each 10 who graduated to as many as 8 for each 10 who graduated.

2. The size of the school had little effect on the proportion of withdrawals.

3. Of those who withdrew, slightly over half (54 per cent) were boys. However, in grade 10, 58 per cent of the withdrawals were boys; in grade 12, 59 per cent of the withdrawals were boys; and in grade 11, 54 per cent of the withdrawals were girls.

4. Approximately 4 of every 5 withdrawing would presumably have been near the bottom of their class had they persisted in school.

5. Seventy-two per cent of the drop-outs come from families classed as laborers, although scarcely fifty per cent of the adult population is so classed.

To determine why pupils withdraw from a particular school, local holding power studies must be made. Some of the probable reasons (hypotheses) why boys, failing or near-failing pupils, and children from low income families tend so strongly to withdraw from school are as follows: Difficulty in adjustment to school work; tensions induced by uncertainties regarding the future, including military service; the effects of teen-age employment opportunities; the consequences of "fail-pass" practices; the operations of different standards and expectations; the extent to which the pupils do or do not see the relationships between school work and real life activities; the extent to which middle-class teachers understand the pupils from lower class homes; the degree of exclusion of the lower income group from the highly valued extra-class activities; the necessity of engaging in part-time jobs making it impossible for some pupils to engage in extra-class activities; the inability of the lower income families to pay the costs of participating in school activities; the lure of earning immediate spending money; the inclination toward early marriage; the substantial costs of attending a "free" high school.

Of these thirteen reasons why pupils may be dropping out of high school, none should be accepted except on the basis of factual data locally derived.

A study of extra-class activities and a study of hidden tuition costs tested two of these hypotheses in a limited number of schools.

III

The study of participation in extra-class activities was designed to test the plausibility of the hypothesis that pupils from lower income families may tend to be excluded from extra-class school life. Administrators supplied general data concerning extra-class activities, and pupils answered questions about their interest and participation in activities.

Pupils indicated that they receive most satisfaction from commercial entertainment (public dances, motion pictures, bowling, etc.). Second most satisfying were extra-class activities of the school. Third were home activities (parties, games, hobbies, etc.). Fourth were unplanned activities (getting together with friends and then deciding what to do). Fifth were noncommercial activities (scouting, YMCA, churches, etc.). Last were school subjects.

When pupils were divided into three socio-economic groups (upper, middle, and lower), it was found that in each of the

thirteen schools studied the pupils in the highest socio-economic group participated in the most extra-class activities. In some schools the difference was not great, with upper group pupils taking part in a median of 5.8 activities each, and lower group pupils in 5.3 each. But in other schools the variation was much greater: 11.2 to 3.1, 4.8 to 1.3, 3.9 to 0.6, or even 5.9 to 0.0.

IV

The hidden tuition costs study was designed to find out how much it actually costs a pupil to attend one of our "free" high schools. Only the figures of especial interest to English teachers are presented in this condensation.

1. A number of schools require a special fee, assessment, or deposit for English courses. These costs vary from nothing to \$5.00.

2. All schools surveyed require pupils to buy special materials or items of equipment for their English courses. These costs vary from \$0.10 to \$21.50.

3. Total costs per pupil in English courses where textbooks must be purchased vary from \$1.00 to \$24.00. In schools with a textbook rental system these costs for English books and supplies vary from \$0.20 to \$20.50. In schools supplying free textbooks, English costs per pupil vary from nothing to \$3.40.

A further study was made of the cost of participation in extra-class activities. Class dues range from \$0.25 to \$5.00. Cost of taking part in an interscholastic sport for one year varies from nothing to \$100.00. Cost of belonging to a school club ranges from nothing to \$50.00. (Literary clubs report a range from nothing to \$7.20, library clubs from nothing to \$5.05, future teachers clubs from nothing to \$2.25.) Cost of attending school dances varies from \$0.10 to \$17.00. Graduation costs reach as much as \$8.00 for announcements, \$2.00 for name cards, \$20.00 for pictures, \$2.75 for cap and gown, and \$10.00 for miscellaneous.

Other expenditures are incurred for such items as brief cases, gifts, insurance, locker, notebook, pen and pencils, P.E. uniform, school sweater, towel fee, yearbook photo, and various solicitations.

Since in December, 1948, 28 per cent of all American families found it impossible to pay their bills out of current income, it seems plausible that the children of many lower income families do not participate extensively in extra-class activities because they cannot afford to do so. Perhaps hidden tuition also is a factor in numerous withdrawals from school.

V

The guidance study is of considerable interest to English teachers because, as the following tables indicate, this study revealed the problems that are uppermost in the minds of many pupils.

TABLE 1—Rank Order of Problem Areas Indicated by Twelfth Grade Pupils (1 = Highest frequency of mention)

PROBLEM AREA	RANK		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Adjustment to school work.....	1	2	1
Curriculum and teaching procedures.....	3	4	2.5
Future: vocational and educational.....	2	5	2.5
Personal-psychological relations.....	8	1	4.5
Social-psychological relations.....	6	3	4.5
Social and recreational activities.....	4.5	6	6
Courtship, sex, marriage.....	4.5	8	7
Health and physical development.....	8	7	8
Finances, living conditions, and employment.....	8	9.5	9
Home and family.....	11	9.5	10.5
Morals and religion.....	10	11	10.5

TABLE 2—Problems Checked by Twenty-Five Per Cent or More of the Twelfth Grade Pupils of Either Sex

PROBLEM	PER CENT	
	Boys	Girls
Military service.....	46	4
Taking things too seriously.....	24	40
Wanting better personality.....	20	35
Losing my temper.....	21	34
Being too easily hurt.....	10	31
Fear of making mistakes.....	22	31
Worrying.....	30	29
Ways of saving money.....	29	22
Having less money than friends do.....	11	29
Learning to dance.....	29	11
Not knowing what I want.....	25	29
Restlessness in class.....	26	29
Dullness of classes.....	28	29
What I'll be ten years hence.....	28	25
Nervousness.....	17	27
Lack of time for studying.....	27	25
Worry about grades.....	21	27
Overweight.....	7	26
Forgetting things.....	23	26
Daydreaming.....	22	26
Weakness in spelling and grammar.....	26	8
Worry over exams.....	20	26
Need for an occupational decision.....	25	22
Fear of speaking in class.....	13	25
Shortness of lunch hour.....	25	23